

17 Schwansener See

17.1 Change of the site by project activities:

Meadow birds, little tern colony and *B. calamita* are in focus at this project site. The wet meadows are fresh water meadows, because the Schwansener See is a fresh water lake with regulated outlet to the Baltic Sea.

The target toad *B. calamita* had at that site the last mainland population at the Schleswig-Holstein Baltic Sea coast. When the project started the males were counted and only 12 calling males were found. Due to the small size of the population an extinction risk was obvious. So the project started supportive breeding with the effect of 60 calling males in 2009. In 2010 also young *B. calamita* toads from natural re-production in 2009 were found.

Parallel ditches were blocked and depressions re-activated in the meadows with the aim of fresh water retention and creation of shallow flooding. This was so successful that *B. calamita* starts to call in about 6 new shallow flooding.

Another aim was to increase the grazed area and reduce the land reeds at the eastern embankment of the lagoon. In 2010 this was already quite successful and the meadows are open now towards the lagoon. The meadow birds can use the edges of the lagoon again as foraging habitat. In the meadows Lapwings and Redshanks are breeding. An island within one of the shallow flooding was used by 6 to 8 pairs of Avocet for breeding in 2009 and 2010.

Up to now Dunlin and Ruff were monitored only on migration, but Ruff is regularly dancing at the site in spring. The Southern most meadow was grazed only from August to end of April. The idea was to have some suitable vegetation for Ruff. The state financed monitoring in 2009 especially targeted the Ruff, but no breeding female was found. The meadow birds at the site have a quite high density. Due to many new flooding, which dry up during the spring and early summer even in dry years there is enough water and foraging area for Lapwing and Common Redshank chicks. Also the now re-opened edges of the lagoon provide good foraging possibilities.

Wet meadows with depressions in 2007, lagoon in background



New depressions in 2007



Breeding Lapwing in 2010



Lagoon edge in 2005....



...and in 2010



The beach wall which is owned by the diking agency was integrated into the grazing management in 2010 after some time of negotiations with the authority and the municipalities about the access for the cattle and the conditions of grazing. The fence was built in a way that the fence line towards the water provides also the possibility to activate it as a fox fence. This enabled in 2010 7 pairs of little tern to breed successfully on the upper beach. Within the first late summer/autumn grazing the *Rosa rugosa* scrub was shortened and the old grass and litter in the remaining grey dunes areas was removed. The area provides better land habitat for *B. calamita* for 2011 and this will increase in the next years.

In the lagoon artificial breeding islands were put out. The number of common terns breeding there successful has increase up to 60 pairs in 2010.

During the presentation of results in 5/2011 at the site also orchids could be seen as a result from the grazing management: a little less flowering plants but much more young plants, then in previous times.

17.2 Remaining challenges and actions:

The Baltcoast meadow management was quite successful at the site and is a good example how meadows should be managed for meadow birds and for *B. calamita*.

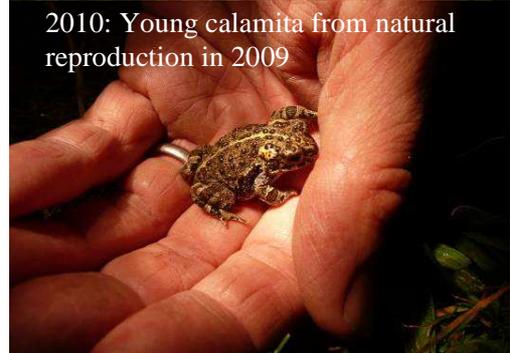
The artificial breeding islands function very well. Also the new fox fence provided protection for the little tern at the beach. With the change from summer grazing with normal cattle to robust cattle whole year grazing improved the conservation status of the meadows with in increase of rare species.

Most of the conservation aims at the site had been reached for birds and toads. Remaining is the fine tuning of the grazing management in the meadows to achieve an even shorter swart in some areas so that the attractiveness for Dunlin will even increase. The dune grazing against *Rosa rugosa* has to be performed over at least 10 years in future to reduce the density. *Rosa rugosa* had been reduced over 90% in the areas of whole year grazing.

Calamita pair in 2009 in flooding in restored depression



2010: Young calamita from natural reproduction in 2009



2010: fox fence along beach for Little tern



5/2011: grazing opened the reed bed a long the lagoon



5/2011: Dactylorhiza majalis orchids



Of course at the beach wall this is not the case after the first grazing period in 2010. When the grey dune vegetation has recovered in the remaining patches, then the grazing regime will be changed to whole year grazing to have a better effect on *Rosa rugosa*.

17.3 Public perception:

The two involved municipalities and the diking authority understood the idea of the project from the beginning, but about the details of the set up of the beach wall grazing some negotiations had to be done. The improvement of the meadows by the projects activities as e.g. the whole year grazing and the ditch blocking was regarded as positive effect, because e.g. visitors can see more birds at the meadows.

In 2010 the two municipalities started an own initiative to up-date the concept for visitor information at the site in negotiations with the Nabu, who is responsible for operating the information at the bird wardens hut. This process is still ongoing.

In 2011 the official management plan process was started. The feedback from municipalities and private landowners was good. The plan will be finished and published by the Ministry in 2012

The frog concert festival of the Stiftung Naturschutz in the last years offered an opportunity to hear the increased choir of *B. calamita* calling in rainy nights in late spring. 16 visitors were counted also in 2011 frog concert, with positive feedback on the project activities.

Additionally nature guided tours provided information about the LIFE-project. Info boards provide details about the site and the target species along the hiking pass crossing the site parallel to the coastline.



Introduction to frog concert at the info board in 6/2011